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John Carter

Civ. Pers.

DECISION



THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-186256

DATE: November 17, 1976

MATTER OF: Goldstein, David B. - Miscellaneous Expenses -
Modifications to Mobile Home

DIGEST: Employee transferred to Fairbanks, Alaska, claims reimbursement for materials, etc., used to modify mobile home to comply with Alaska Code requirements, telephone calls incident to transfer, and Alaska state certificate of weights and measure. Reimbursement of cost of materials etc., is prohibited by Federal Travel Regulations since they were newly acquired and used for structural alterations. Depending on nature of certificate, it is allowable as miscellaneous expense or transportation expense. Telephone calls may be reimbursed only if they are documented and were required in connection with item which is allowable.

This action is in response to a request for an advance decision from C. J. Terry, an authorized certifying officer of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) concerning the propriety of certifying for payment a reclaim voucher presented by David B. Goldstein for reimbursement of the expenses of modifying a mobile home, incident to a transfer of station.

The record shows that Mr. Goldstein, an NOAA employee, was transferred from Camp Springs, Maryland, to Fairbanks, Alaska, by travel order dated December 19, 1975, which authorized the transportation of his mobile home to Alaska for use as a residence. Mr. Goldstein incurred considerable expense to have his home altered to meet the Alaska state code for mobile homes and, incident thereto, claimed as miscellaneous expenses the sum of \$2,197.25 for materials, tools, inspections, and labor related to the modification of his mobile home, an additional \$200 for telephone calls, and \$25 for an Alaska state certificate of weights and measures for the house. The agency reimbursed Mr. Goldstein \$880.95, or 2 weeks salary for a GS-13, the maximum miscellaneous expenses allowance. Mr. Goldstein reclaimed the total not paid less \$10 for long distance telephone calls. Subsequently he reduced his claim for telephone calls by \$45, the cost of local service.

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The authority for the reimbursement to Federal employees of the miscellaneous expenses necessarily incurred incident to a transfer is contained in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), FPMR 101-7 (May 1973), chapter 2, part 3. While employees may be reimbursed the costs involved in preparing their mobile homes for shipment and for reassembling them at the new duty station as miscellaneous expenses under the conditions and limitations prescribed in FTR para. 2-3.3b, the controlling regulations do not contemplate underwriting the cost of new equipment for an employee's home. Therefore, reimbursement of the expenses incurred for additional insulation, materials, tools, etc., must be denied as newly acquired items. FTR para. 2-3.1c(5); B-176476, August 21, 1972. Furthermore, since these expenses represent the costs of structural alterations to the home, their reimbursement is expressly prohibited by FTR para. 2-3.1c(13). See also B-181007, August 2, 1974.

The record does not indicate the nature of the fee of \$25 charged for an Alaskan state weights and measures certificate for the home. However, if the certificate was required for the licensing of the home, it would be reimbursable as a miscellaneous expense. On the other hand, if it was required to permit the home to be moved over the Alaska roads, by a commercial carrier, it may be reimbursed as a transportation expense in accordance with FTR para. 2-7.3a(2).

On previous occasion we have been called upon to decide whether long-distance calls in connection with the employee's relocation were reimbursable expenses. Our past decisions have primarily concerned the purpose of the call, i.e., whether it concerned an item which would constitute an allowable expense. B-185160, January 2, 1976. In the instant case, the calls may be reimbursed only if they are documented and were required in connection with the relocation of Mr. Goldstein's mobile home or some other item which is allowable.

Mr. Goldstein's entitlement to reimbursement should be recomputed on the basis of the foregoing and any overpayment collected. The voucher is returned and may not be certified for payment.

Deputy


Comptroller General
of the United States